

## One Man's Meat Is Another Man's Poison: Imagery of Wholesomeness in the Discourse of Meatpacking from 1900-1910

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Anybody who thinks about *The Jungle* today believes that Sinclair wrote his book to expose the foul conditions of the meatpacking industry. In fact, he wrote it to awaken the nation to the exploitation of immigrant workers in Chicago's Packingtown and to advocate the workers' conversion to Socialism. But the early 20th-century American public, obsessed with cleanliness and wholesomeness, did not care about the immigrants' welfare. They cared that foreigners, likely carriers of "filthy diseases," were threatening the cleanliness of their meat supply.

How Sinclair's call to Socialism led to a public outcry to clean up the meatpacking houses is a stunning example of the power of imagery to resonate with the public and, ultimately, to effect change. Images of disease and wholesomeness were used to manipulate readers' interpretations of the alleged abuses of the meatpacking industry. Journalists framed their articles by selecting certain issues and images that supported their particular view of reality (Entman 53) and reinforced the public's concern with cleanliness and fear of foreigners.

The imagery of wholesomeness, which pervaded all discussions of meatpacking, suggested physical, mental and moral health, and the mingling of these forms of health was common in popular discourse of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The discourse of wholesomeness was tied to social concerns regarding dirt, disease and immigrants. It was a commonly held belief in the United States that moral weakness or poor self-control, not poverty, were responsible for the high incidence of disease and death among the urban masses. Much of this urban population, particularly in the Chicago stockyards, comprised waves of Irish, German, and Slavic immigrants seeking a better life. Americans claimed that it was not

the size but the "character" of the immigrant pool that made them uncomfortable, and they were repulsed by the newcomers' personal habits including lack of hygiene and consumption of strange foods.<sup>1</sup> Americans considered these immigrants the great "unwashed" who were incapable of improving their environment due to ignorance and lack of discipline.

The body of media discourse examined for this paper consists of news and opinion articles from consumer magazines and newspapers during 1905-1907.<sup>2</sup> These are the years when Sinclair exposed his findings of the meatpacking industry as well as the years immediately before and after passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. Additionally, these media vehicles carried advertising targeted to consumers most likely to purchase meat products. Advertisers, particularly Armour and Swift, positioned their products as wholesome food; meat was described as pure, high quality, and doctor-recommended.

The magazines and newspapers reflect a broad spectrum of views on the meatpacking controversy. The muckraking journals rallied behind Sinclair, painting a grim picture of filthy factories and exploited workers, while the more conservative business papers supported the capitalists' enormous profits and productivity. *Century Magazine's* founder and editor, Dr. Hosiab Gilbert Holland, known as a popular and effective preacher of social and domestic issues (Mott 459-60), wrote editorials that covered morals and manners, politics, religion, and current affairs. In 1902, the magazine ran a series of articles on the major corporations of the day: the Beef Trust, United States Steel Corporation, Standard Oil Company, and the American Sugar Refining Company. The magazine was considered an effective force in political and social reform



during its 60 years of publication. *Cosmopolitan* magazine ran a series in which distinguished men and women described their attitudes toward life, and the October 1906, issue carried Upton Sinclair's story, "What Life Means to Me." *Leslie's Weekly*, the "tired business man's weekly," provided entertainment and self-improvement. From June through November of 1906, the paper ran seven news articles or editorials in support of the meatpackers; one article decrying the cruelty to cattle; and one criticizing the meatpackers' use of preservatives.

During the first four months of 1906, *McClure's* magazine, one of the muckraking publications of the day, ran Ray Stannard Baker's famous series on the railroad trust. The January article, "The Private Car and the Beef Trust," was a stinging indictment of Armour's monopoly achieved largely through ownership of special freight cars and rebates from the railroads. *Collier's* magazine, another of the great muckrakers, ran a cartoon portraying the evils of the beef trust on the cover of its January 28, 1905, issue (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> A fat man in a top hat is flouting the law by wiping his feet on a mat with the words "Sherman Anti-Trust Law."<sup>3</sup> The man has the neck, ears, snout and belly of a pig, and he represents the trusts, frequently described as hogs, who are unable to comply with the law. The man holds a slice of bacon above the head of a dog, symbolic of the public, who is forced to beg for an overpriced scrap of meat.

From 1905 to 1907, *Collier's* ran seven articles condemning the meat-packing industry. The last article, in March 1907, was determined to keep the "jungle" in the news. The jungle itself is a powerful image defined as a place of violence, struggle for survival, or ruthless competition. Sinclair's jungle is a tangle of animals and men where workers toil and livestock die in dark and filthy slaughterhouses so that American families will eat well and American capitalists will prosper. The 1907 article reminded readers that the Federal law affected only half the meat in the United States, that which was involved in interstate or international commerce. As for the other half, "conditions are the same as before the excitement."<sup>4</sup> It is these "conditions" that preoccupied the writers and advertisers of the period and the public whom they sought to influence: Did the conditions in the meatpacking plants

create a product that was wholesome and healthy enough to eat?

The mixing of spiritual and bodily health appeared in advertisements for products as diverse as cosmetics, patent medicine and meat products, and the discourse of meatpacking contained constellations of images for both a "sound mind" and a "sound body." The spirit/body dualism, so prevalent in the psyche of the era, is reflected in Sinclair's comment on *The Jungle*, which he considered a failure: "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach" (*Cosmopolitan* 594).

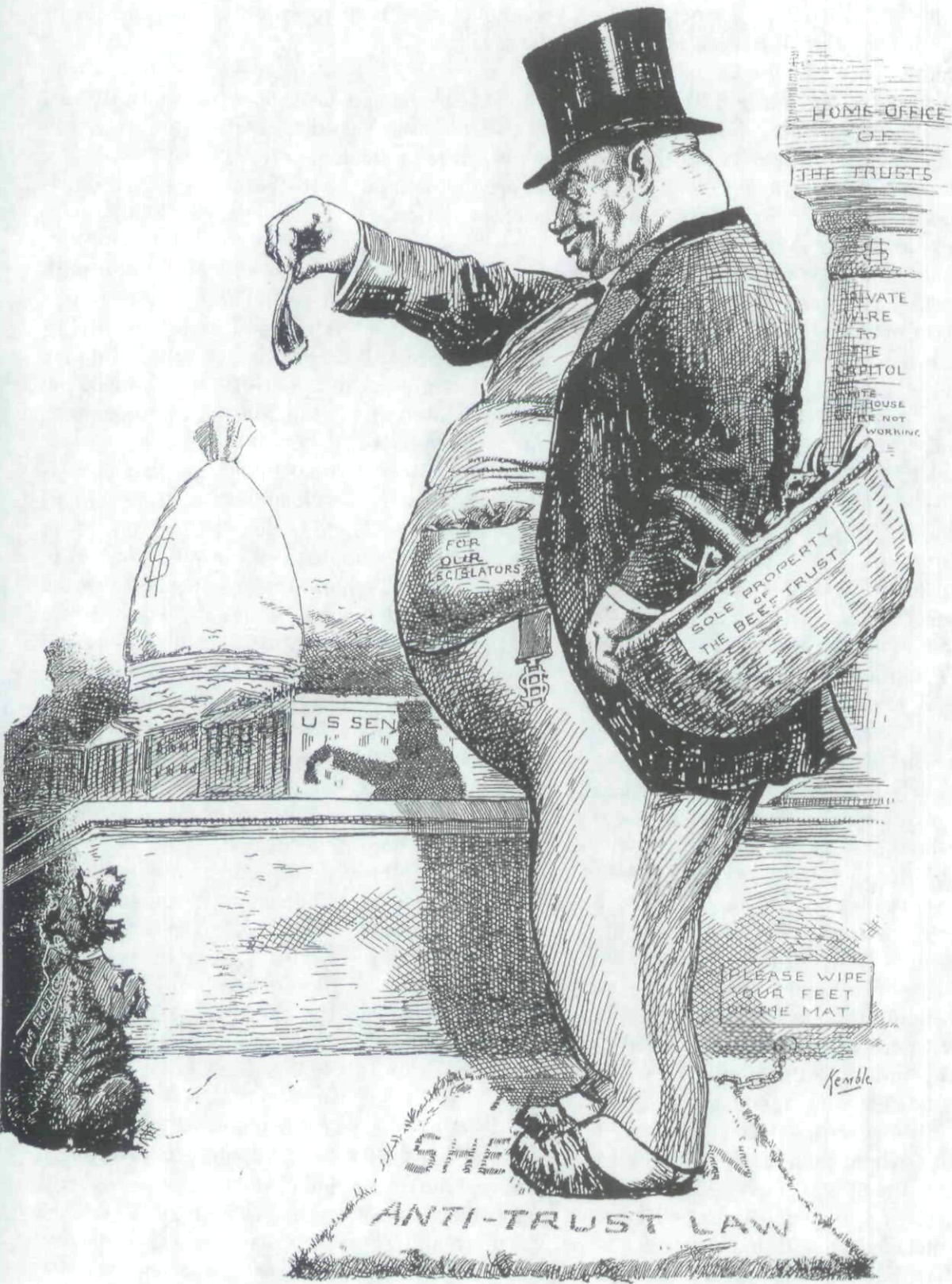
*The Jungle* ran in serial form in the Socialist weekly, *Appeal to Reason*, starting in early 1905. The serial was a popular form for both fiction and non-fiction, and this format made Sinclair's ideas accessible to many people who might not otherwise have been exposed to them due to limited funds or awareness. The format also generated suspense as readers awaited each new installment in the travails of Jurgis and his family. When the serial was released in book form in 1906, Sinclair reached an even wider audience with diverse political and social viewpoints. Although articles about the beef trust and labor conditions in the meatpacking industry appeared as early as 1902, none generated the heated response that followed publication of Sinclair's work. No one previously had depicted the gritty details of the packing-houses: the intense heat, blood-slicked floors, sickening odors, filthy or non-existent restrooms, the germs and tuberculosis associated with diseased and rotting meat. *The Jungle's* blood and guts imagery, coupled with the public's fear and prejudice, propelled the meatpacking controversy onto center stage.

#### *Sound in Body*

In its broadest sense, "wholesome" refers to that which is conducive to moral or general well-being, and it is suggestive of moral or physical health, especially in appearance. The relationship between wholesomeness and health is illustrated through a series of opposing images. On the one hand is a constellation of images that includes cleanliness, whiteness, and purity, as well as medical imagery; on the other, is a constellation that includes depravation, filth and disease.

The preoccupation with disease and germs was spelled out by William T. Sedgwick, profes-





"BEG, YOU CUR, BEG!"

DRAWN BY E. W. KEMBLE

Figure 1. Cartoon on front cover of *Collier's*, January 1905.



sor at MIT, in his 1902 treatise, *Principles of Sanitary Science and the Public Health*. His treatise was considered "so vitally important that its elements at least should be mastered by every mature member of a community." Filth was considered dangerous because it was both a carrier and a source of disease, and cleanliness applied not only to a person but to his environment. With respect to industrial pursuits, "canning and preserving [of beef] are far more successfully carried out, if done with scrupulous regard for cleanliness..." (345-6). In his piece, Sedgwick explicitly connects cleanliness and disease prevention, while implicitly linking the "mature members of a community" to the meatpacking workers whose understanding of germs and disease is considered critical to the health of the community, yet insufficient.

Sinclair describes Jurgis's hell of a workplace as hot, dark, dirty, smelly and, above all, filled with germs and disease. Germs could lead not only to the death of the workers, Sinclair's primary concern, but to the death, or at least disease, of consumers. Packingtown, where the Chicago meatpackers lived, is devoid of any semblance of health or vitality: "One never saw the fields, nor any green thing whatever..." (Sinclair 27).

A three-part article in *Collier's*, "Is Chicago Meat Clean?" juxtaposes negative and positive images of wholesomeness. The first part was written by Sinclair prior to release of his novel; the second presents excerpts of an article by a "Special Sanitary Commissioner" written for the *Lancet*, a leading British medical journal; the third part is a response to the *Lancet* piece by Major L.L. Seaman, an "eminent specialist in sanitation." The *Lancet* piece is highly critical of the meatpacking industry and emphasizes the darkness and dirt of the packinghouses as well as the prevalence of "bacilli from the sputum of a population among whom pulmonary tuberculosis is more prevalent than among any other section of the inhabitants of Chicago." As the editorial comment explains, these conditions menace the health not only of people in the United States, but of people wherever meats packed in Chicago are consumed (13-14).

Sinclair's piece reiterates the presence of disease and describes the laxity with which inspectors check for tuberculosis and trichinae in pork. Sinclair adds another dimension to this unwhole-

some picture—the preparation and appearance of the sausage:

All the best meat goes to Europe. That which is found utterly spoiled and impossible of sale is either ground up into sausage or canned.... There comes back from Europe old sausage that has been rejected and that is mouldy and white.

Although whiteness is usually associated with purity, in this case it is associated with putrid meat. Seaman brushes aside the revolting descriptions of Chicago's meat and concludes that "not only is this great industry wholesome and sound, but that in the interests of humanity it must remain so" (13-14).

*Leslie's Weekly*, in keeping with its conservative stance, lauds the cleanliness of the packinghouses in a June, 1906, article, "The Truth about Chicago Packing-houses by One Who Worked in Them." Charles Wharton, congressman from the Packingtown district in Chicago, worked in a packinghouse in his youth, and he likens the inside of the slaughterhouse to a hospital operating room that is regularly cleaned. He does, however, acknowledge that there were foreigners, "illiterate, and in varying stages of mental development," who were unable to maintain the "standard of our ideals."<sup>5</sup> These men, he assures his readers, were fired (594-6).

A second article, published one month later in *Leslie's*, also addressed the concern regarding foreigners' sanitary habits. "Soap and Water in Chicago's Packing-houses" used several photographs to illustrate the exemplary health measures practiced in the three largest packinghouses: workers in a sausage-stuffing room at Armour scrubbing tables with hot water and soap; government inspectors at Swift examining hog glands for tuberculosis; a wash-room in the packing plant of Libby, McNeill & Libby (6). These photos were intended to show the cleanliness of both meat and men. With such "wholesome" conditions in their plants, advertisers were eager to tell consumers their stories. Armour encouraged visitors to their plants, "six of the largest, cleanest and best equipped of the kind in the world."

Armour responded to an accusation that they stuffed foul leftover parts of livestock into sausage casings or tin cans with an ad for



## MEATS FOR EMERGENCIES

¶ What mother's preserves were when "company" came, Armour's "Veribest" canned meats are for the luncheon, tea, picnic, or other emergency. They are dainty and toothsome and always ready, saving time and kitchen worry. ¶ Meats for the "Veribest" brand are carefully selected and are all rigorously inspected; seasonings are absolutely pure; perfect vacuum-process canning, with thorough cooking and sterilizing completes their preparation. Suggestions, directions and recipes on the back of each can-wrapper will help you make "Veribest" a source of never ending satisfaction to family and guests. Here are some of the ready-to-serve delicacies put up under the "Veribest" brand:



Ox Tongue    Boneless Pigs Feet    Veal Loaf    Corned Beef    Boned Chicken  
Compressed Ham    Pork and Beans    Vienna Sausage    Hamburger Steak

Figure 2. Advertisement for Armour's "Veribest" canned meats, *Leslie's Weekly*, 1906.

"Veribest" canned meats. The language highlighted the flavor and purity of the meat: "dainty and toothsome," "carefully selected," "rigorously inspected," "perfect vacuum-process canning, with thorough cooking and sterilizing." The visual is a neatly arranged plate of clean but bland-looking sliced meat (*Leslie's Weekly*, Sept. 1906). (Fig. 2)

Libby's response was more visually distinct. Rather than a plate of meat, the advertisement shows a woman holding a jar of "Peerless Dried Beef" (Fig. 3). The woman appears to be wearing a white apron or smock with a matching ribbon in her hair, and the full-page ad is surrounded by a chain of leaves and flowers suggesting the light and air of the outdoors. The woman is wholesome to a fault, and the overall image is of an unattractive nurse or healthcare attendant. The copy suggests trying "Creamed Dried Beef in a

chafing dish." Both the visual and the copy appear clean and healthy but not appealing. Only the name "Peerless" implies that the product is in a class of its own (*McClure's*, May 1906).

Swift counters the packinghouse imagery of odor and darkness with a picture of corn fields that are "responsible for the fine flavor, delicate grain and tenderness of Premium Hams and Bacon" (Fig. 4). There's no chance of disease here amidst the bucolic fields, sunshine, and "cleanly methods of manufacture" (*McClure's*, April 1909). Another image of wholesomeness is the "Little Cook," a Swift icon for generations (Fig. 5). She is purity personified. Her childish face, blond curls, and Maryjane shoes create an impression of health and youthful innocence; her stout figure and command of the kitchen tell the consumer that Swift is a mature, responsible company and puts only the finest healthiest prod-



# Libby's

## Peerless Dried Beef



It is water-sliced, tender and lean, and has a delicious flavor.

For a delightful after-theatre spread, try Creamed Dried Beef in a chafing dish. Recipe for the asking.

## Libby's (Natural Flavor) Food Products

Dried Beef  
Veal Loaf

Ox Tongues  
Lunch Tongues

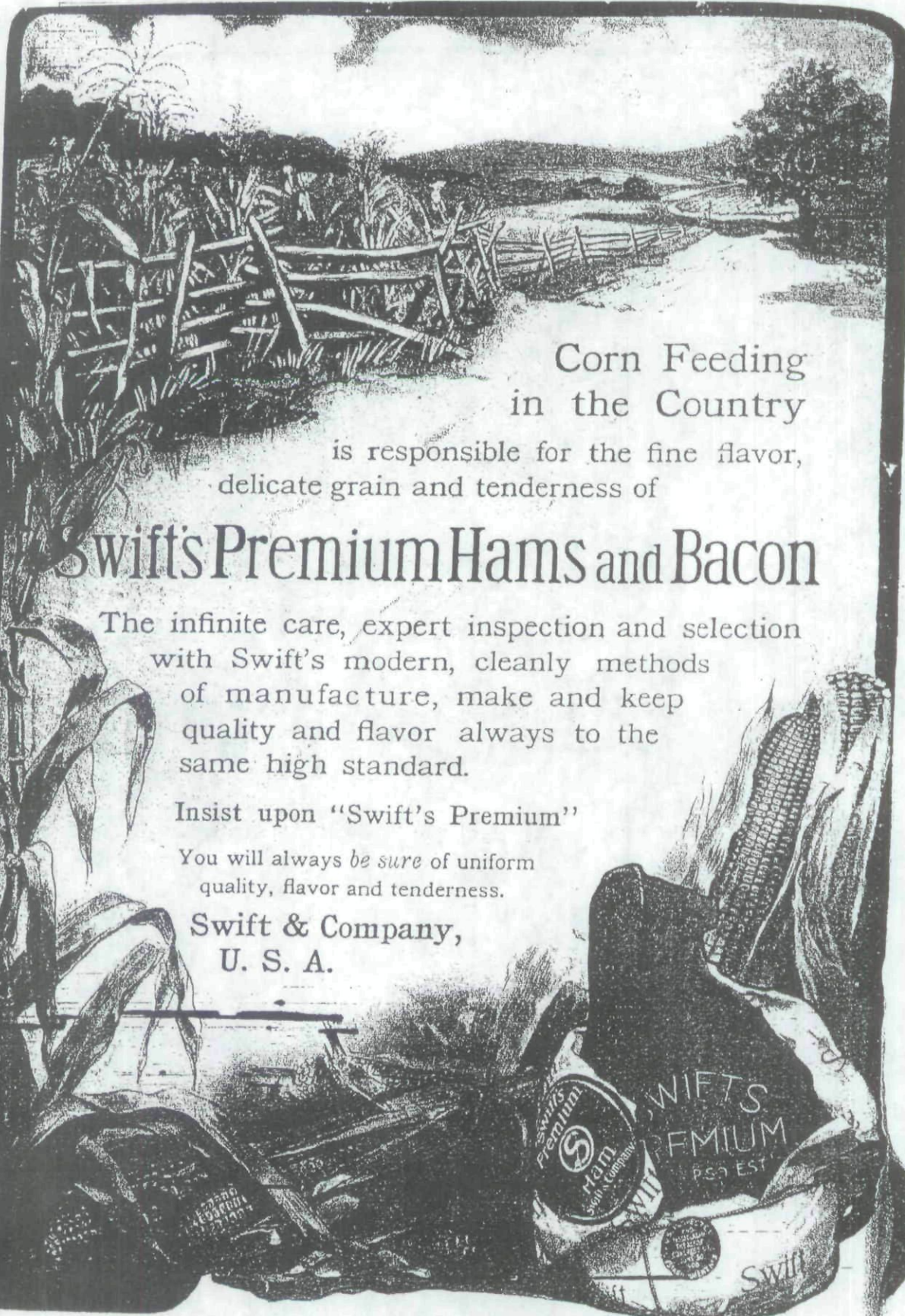
Vienna Sausage  
Boneless Chicken

The booklet, "How to Make Good Things to Eat," sent free. Send 10c for Libby's Big Atlas of the World.

**Libby, McNeill & Libby, Chicago**

Figure 3. Advertisement for Libby's Peerless Dried Beef, *McClure's*, May 1906.





Corn Feeding  
in the Country

is responsible for the fine flavor,  
delicate grain and tenderness of

## Swift's Premium Hams and Bacon

The infinite care, expert inspection and selection  
with Swift's modern, cleanly methods  
of manufacture, make and keep  
quality and flavor always to the  
same high standard.

Insist upon "Swift's Premium"

You will always *be sure* of uniform  
quality, flavor and tenderness.

Swift & Company,  
U. S. A.

Figure 4. Advertisement for Swift's Premium Hams and Bacon, McClure's, April 1909.



# Swift's Little Cooking Lessons

# Swift's Premium HAMS and Bacon



The illustration shows a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a white chef's hat with "Swift's Little Cook" written on it, a white dress with a dark apron, and dark shoes. She is smiling and holding a round platter with a cooked ham and eggs. To her left is a large bag of Swift's Premium Ham and Bacon, with a label that reads "SWIFT'S PREMIUM HAM AND BACON" and "SWIFT & COMPANY U.S.A.". The background is dark and textured.

**Ham and Eggs**

Take a thin slice of Premium Ham, dip in cold water, lightly dry on a cloth, broil quickly over a hot fire. Put in frying pan lamp of butter and one of Silver Leaf and sufficient to cover bottom of pan when melted. Break each egg into a saucer - slide carefully into the hot grease. Cook gently till desired degree of brownness obtained. If cooked rapidly, grease becomes hot and eggs will be dark around edges whereas they should be milky white. Serve around Ham on platter, garnish with sprigs of parsley. (If you use ham grease for frying eggs, they will be dark and greasy looking.)

Swift & Company  
U.S.A.

Figure 5. Advertisement for Swift's Premium Hams and Bacon, *Leslie's Weekly*, March 1906.



ucts on her table (*Leslie's Weekly*, March 1906). Dressed all in white, Swift's Little Cook assures the housewife that she is one of them: clean, healthy, and American.

It would be hard to convey the image of wholesomeness more clearly than did Armour in its ad for "Star Bacon" (Fig. 6). A quarter-page ad in *Collier's* shows a doctor at the top and a mother and daughter at the bottom. The headline reads, "The Doctor said 'Bacon' and plenty of it" because it is "A fine food for delicate children who need fat and up-building." The ad's language has a technical/medical tone and assumes a well-educated reader; bacon is easily digested because "...Bacon-fat is in 'Granular form.' It can be eaten with impunity by persons to whom other forms of fat are intolerable." The ad even attempts to persuade the consumer that bacon fat is good for the child, that it is "inseparable from 'Good Condition'—from well-nourished Fibre" (*Collier's*, August 1906). The line drawing of the doctor shows a serious man in a three-piece suit holding a box with a star, Armour's symbol of its hams and bacon. He conveys the image of an "expert" whose treatment is unquestionably accepted by the mother serving her small daughter a plate of bacon. The doctor's advice to the mother regarding the wholesomeness of bacon is juxtaposed to the "doctoring" of the spoiled hog meat in Sinclair's novel (37). One cannot miss the irony of the girl and the hog both being "doctored" to improve their health and appearance as well as the further irony of the animal as a remedy for the child.

#### *Sound in Mind*

Less obvious, but no less prevalent, is the image of wholesomeness as moral health. The *Ladies Home Journal* ran two articles in 1896 regarding bathing and its effect on morality. "When and How to Bathe" is a detailed discussion of frequency, water temperature, and type of bath for everyone from infant to adult. The author, Cyrus Edson, MD, ascribes great value to the bath in cases of disease, and during the late 19th and early 20th centuries disease not only meant fever but nervousness and irritability. For the latter condition, Dr. Edson prescribed a three-minute bath followed by bed. The outcome: "You will sleep the sleep of the just" (20). The implica-

tion is that bathing will confer righteousness which leads to a sound mind and a healthy body. The second article equates cleanliness with morality not only among Americans but among Europeans, particularly the Dutch, who are considered "the cleanliest people in the world...[and Holland] the most moral nation on the globe" (Bok 14).

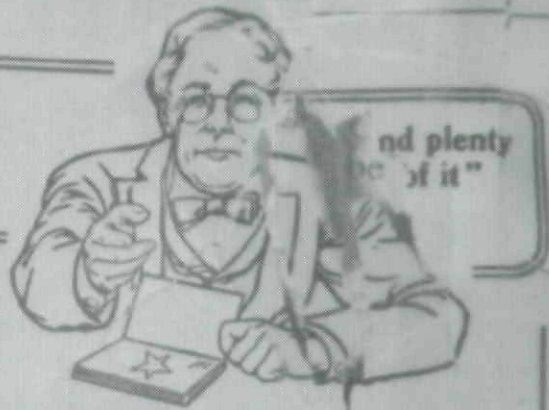
Moral corruption infects all aspects of life in Packingtown. The psychological conditions in the packinghouses are no less onerous than the physical ones: "a seething caldron of jealousies and hatreds...[where] the prospects for an honest man's advancement were virtually non-existent..." (59). Not only workers suffered, but their families did as well. The physical and emotional stress of earning a living under such harsh conditions was unrelenting, and "a whole family would drift into drinking, as the current of a river drifts downstream" (81). Finally, Sinclair indicts the employers, "The great corporation which employed you lied to you, and lied to the whole country—from top to bottom it was nothing but one gigantic lie." (74) Sinclair paints a picture of individuals, families and the whole of corporate America as emotionally and morally bankrupt.

An article in *Leslie's Weekly* comes to the defense of the meatpackers: "A modern packinghouse is a remarkable machine. It is as systematic and almost as automatic as a clock" (Beardsley 616). The early 1900's saw the emergence of what Jackson Lears called the "perfectionist project." Technological superiority became a chief preoccupation of corporate food processors, and standardization was treated as moral progress. National advertisers strove to surround their products with an aura of uniformity and purity, and advertising played a major role in accelerating this pursuit of efficiency (171-87). Thus, the packinghouse is transformed from a breeder of disease and corruption to a model of efficiency and progress.

Coincident with this perfection of industry, was the perfection of man and his home. The image of a smooth-running machine applied equally to the packinghouse, the hearth, and the human body. Key to the smooth running of this domestic operation was the wife. As Lears explains,



**The Doctor said-  
"BACON"**



**G**IVE her Bacon!  
And plenty of it!" said the Doctor.  
—A fine food for delicate children  
who need fat and up-building.  
"Easily Digested?"  
"Yes, assuredly!  
Most easily of all fat foods!  
Why? Because Bacon-fat is in *Gross-  
lar form.*"  
"It can be eaten with impunity by  
persons to whom other forms of fat are  
intolerable."

*Provided—*  
That Bacon has been mild  
—cured—  
Is not too salty.  
Is not too lean,  
Is not too dry and stringy.

*Because—*  
Bacon can benefit, or may injure such  
People according to the *Quality* of meat  
in it, and the *Manner* of curing it.  
A lean hog means a poorly nourished  
Hog—  
Poor *Quality* of meat.

Bacon from such a Hog will be dry,  
stringy and comparatively hard to  
Digest.

Fat, in Bacon is inseparable from "Good  
Condition"—from well nourished Fibre.  
The *Lean* meat of such Bacon will be  
rich in Flavor, Juicy, Nutritious and  
Digestible.

That's if the nutriment in it has not  
been *fucked out*, by an excessively  
Strong, Salty, Briny "Cure!"  
Even *Good* meat can be Petrified in Salt,  
you know.

So that People who want—  
The most Nourishment—  
The most Digestibility—  
The finest Meat Flavor—

Had better specify the  
"Star" grade of Armour  
Bacon—at a little higher  
Cost.



And see, for themselves, that the "Star"  
of Quality is actually burnt into the skin  
of the Bacon.

*Because—*  
Only about *One Hog* in every *Fifteen*  
received at the huge Armour Plants daily  
is there considered *Superfluous* enough to  
produce Armour "Star" grade of  
Bacon.

It must be a corn-fed Hog.  
Because these have the firmest, sweetest  
flesh.

It must be a barrow Hog.  
Because these have the fullest Flavor.

It must be a Young, but fully matured  
Hog.

Because these are Tender, Fine-Grained,  
and Thin-Skinned.

It must be a well-nourished, fairly Fat  
Hog.

Because, these are the juiciest and most  
Digestible.

Then these Selected Fitches of Bacon  
must be "Cured" by a Mild, Sweet,  
Piquant, Armour Liquid.

Because that brings out and develops  
all the fine, rich, subtle, meat flavors  
with an added spice.

And it does this without leaving a sug-  
gestion of that Salty, Fucky, taste that is  
noticeable in common kinds of Bacon.

Then comes the *Smoking*,—  
Just enough to preserve the meat, and  
give a delicate suggestion of wood fire  
odor.

No other Bacon is quite so delicious, nor  
so suited to the Invalid or the Epicure or  
the growing child.

*Remember—*  
None other is so carefully Selected, and  
so skillfully Developed as The "Star"  
grade of Armour's Bacon.

**Armour's  
"STAR Hams  
and Bacon"**

as made  
d ideal.  
luxury made  
distinct dec-

Figure 6. Advertisement for Armour's "Star Hams and Bacon," Collier's, August 1906.



The newer, corporate-sponsored version of domesticity, in national advertisements and the magazines they supported, recast women's role. It placed comparatively less emphasis on women's responsibility to the wider culture,...and more on their duties to the boy-men who were their husbands. (187)

Women's domestic responsibilities always involved the maintenance of morality. They never cooked or washed merely to satisfy their men's needs for food and clean clothes but to satisfy their need for respectability and to guarantee their probity:

A disregard of the body and disorder in dress soon grow into moral slovenliness....it is a wise woman who, careful of the small things about the life of the men of her home, keeps her husband, son or brother up to his highest standard. (Bok 14)

One of the clearest examples of the wife's role is from an Armour two-page spread (Fig. 7):

...carelessly selected, improperly cooked food and indigestion are twin souls. The moral is vivid. If love is to be kept as a permanent dweller in the home the door must be barred against indigestion. So the sensible young wife begins to study the first principles of cooking. (*McClure's*, Oct. 1907)

To aid in her task, Armour offers a cookbook and guarantees its "inestimable worth to women who want to do things the best way possible." The imagery of wholesome family life is illustrated by the picture of a little girl at the top of the ad and a mother at the bottom. The girl is framed (enclosed, protected) in a circle, and she has the ubiquitous white dress, white bow, and white socks as well as curly hair and Maryjanes. The mother, also encircled, appears neatly and conservatively dressed. Both mother and daughter are reading what we can assume to be a cookbook, the "good book" that will preserve domestic tranquility. Like Swift's *Little Cook*, Armour's imagery depicts purity and innocence alongside maturity and responsible food preparation. The pictures of mother and daughter also suggest continuity—the girl grows to womanhood within the safe and nurturing environment of her home. The advertiser not only guarantees its product but also guarantees that consumption of the product will

lead to health and happiness. The wholesome food that a wife prepares will feed her family, nurture her marriage, and drive illness and instability from her door.

### *Conclusion*

The meatpacking controversy of the early 20th century was brought to life in the vivid imagery used by writers and advertisers. Sinclair's disgusting details of the packinghouses fueled the public's fear of filth and foreigners and shifted the focus of his story from the means of production to the actual product.

Dependent upon their biases and politics, journalists framed their portrayals of the packinghouses as either a figment of the "over-wrought imagination of one Mr. Upton Sinclair" (Wharton 594), or as the "most disgusting and reprehensible" process imaginable (Sinclair, Seaman 14). The use of the Food and Drug Administration seal, required after passage of the FDA in 1906, was viewed by one journalist as no more than a good advertisement, which the meat manufacturers used to command a higher price rather than to guarantee the purity and wholesomeness of their product (*Collier's*, March 1907).

The advertisers' story was framed by consumer demand. Advertisers needed to demonstrate that the meat-packing industry maintained the highest standards of cleanliness and health, that immigrant factory workers were not spitting on the floors and working with dirty hands, and that diseased cattle and hogs were not being processed and sold to unsuspecting consumers. The passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act was hailed by the meatpackers as a wise law whose "enforcement must be universal and uniform" (*Collier's*, Dec. 1906, 7). The Federal seal, "U.S. Inspected and Passed," was prominently displayed in the advertisements of Swift and Armour as well as on their meat to guarantee "purity, wholesomeness and correct labeling" (*Leslie's Weekly*, Nov. 1906, 427). Early 20th-century writers and advertisers expressed conflicting views regarding wholesomeness of the country's meat supply. Ultimately, the graphic imagery of tainted meat and dirty immigrants led the government to impose regulations that addressed the public demand for cleanliness.

A comprehensive review of current coverage of the meatpacking industry is beyond the scope



McClure's—The Marketplace of the World



### FIRST PRINCIPLES OF COOKING

During the honeymoon life looks luminous to the young wife. There comes a time, though, when cold, hard-hearted Reality grins mockingly at her. Then she realizes that, after all, life is not one grand, sweet symphony of joy, and the atmosphere of romance comes down to earth with a sudden dull and sickening thud. Love and indigestion have no affinity one for another. On the other hand, carelessly selected, improperly cooked food and indigestion are twin souls. The moral is vivid. If love is to be kept as a permanent dweller in the home the door must be barred against indigestion. So the sensible young wife begins to study the first principles of cooking.

The science of cookery goes deeper than the mere combination of materials—that may be said to be the chemistry of cooking. Its very foundation principle lies in their selection. For instance, a housewife of experience knows that the cheaper cuts of meat really are the most nutritious, but are lacking in flavor. She will utilize these cheaper cuts of meat in the form of stews, ragouts, pot-roasts, etc., adding a little of Armour's Extract of Beef to impart the flavor which they lack. She has learned at least two of the foundation principles of cooking—economy and food values.

A woman who has had no practical experience with Armour's Extract of Beef will be surprised and fascinated to learn the many ways in which it can be used. It has become known the world over as an especially appetizing addition to vegetable dishes, such as peas, green or wax beans, corn and other vegetables. It gives a distinctive flavor which can be secured by no other means. It solves the gravy problem, for it not only colors but gives the real beef flavor when used for this purpose.

A new cook book has just been issued by Armour & Company. "My Favorite Recipes" is intended to be a cook book which will endear itself to every woman who comes across it. Besides containing a number of hints for using Armour's Extract of Beef and recipes for many dishes in which that product is not used, there are blank pages on which may be written the recipes which you prize. The miscellaneous hints and tables of proportions in it alone ought to make it of inestimable worth to women who want to do things the best way possible. Write to Armour & Company, Chicago, enclosing cap from jar of Armour's Extract of Beef, and "My Favorite Recipes" will be mailed to you.



**REGULAR**  
Price 25c.

**FREE TO**  
McClure Readers

Never accept substitutes; insist on getting what you ask for

Figure 7. Armour's advertisement, "First Principles of Cooking," from two-page spread for Extract of Beef, McClure's, October 1907.



of this paper. However, one need only read about the controversy surrounding irradiated beef to realize how imagery continues to shape the public's opinion about what they eat. In 1997, following the biggest beef recall in history (Solomon A11), the Department of Agriculture instituted new meat regulations, over objections of cattlemen and the meat industry (Gray 28). It is ironic that new inspection methods, used to allay the early 20th-century consumers' fears about germs and disease in the meat supply, are coming under fire today.

The FDA now requires use of a sign, a "radura," on packages of meat to indicate that it has been treated by irradiation to kill bacteria, parasites, and insects. Consumers are nervous that this sign indicates that the meat is radioactive. The food industry, in turn, has petitioned the FDA to permit use of the phrase "cold pasteurization" in place of the radura (Burros F1). Pasteurization connotes an image of fresh milk, and consumers today want fresh food: fruits and vegetables that have not been grown with pesticides, livestock that has not been raised with hormones, antibiotics, or feed additives. The new buzzwords are "organic" and "free-range." Marian Burros, in her article, reinforces the preference for untreated meat:

...there is no substitute for fresh ground beef, as I found in an informal taste test of four grilled hamburgers, irradiated and fresh....The standout...was Sunnyside organic, with 15 percent fat and full beefy flavor (1).

Consumer acceptance of change, whether irradiation or any other new technology, will depend, in part, on writers' use of imagery to frame their stories in ways that will touch both the hearts and minds of the public.

\*All images are provided courtesy of the General Research Division of The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jackson Lears, in *Fables of Abundance* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), chapter 5, discusses the various

aspects of wholesomeness used in the discourse of the period. On the connection between wholesomeness and immigrants, see Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 26, 86-8, 92-6, 120. George Buchanan Fife, "The So-Called Beef Trust," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 65 (November, 1902), 156, discusses immigrants' eating preferences, including the snout, which was "trimmed off and sold as a pickling 'delicacy' to new Americans with unpronounceable names."

<sup>2</sup>Original hard copies of most of these publications can be found in The New York Historical Society and the New York Public Library, Humanities and Social Sciences Library. If not available in hard copies, they can be found on microfilm.

<sup>3</sup>Although the law was enacted in 1890, the period from 1897-1911 was one of rapid consolidation, and by 1904, large corporations dominated the American economy. James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State: 1900-1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 63.

<sup>4</sup>Many of these articles carried no bylines; due to the poor condition of both articles and advertisements, many page numbers were also unavailable.

<sup>5</sup>The immigrants' presumed ignorance regarding cleanliness continued to be emphasized into the 1920s and 1930s as illustrated by ads in *Survey* magazine for Fels-Naptha soap: "Mrs. Zambruski doesn't quite understand.... Schooled to squalor she cannot understand our standards of cleanliness. The easier they are to attain, the quicker she adopts them. Fels-Naptha makes them easier...." Another ad, in the *Kuryer Polski*, promoted "Kitchen Klenzer" and warned Polish families in Milwaukee and Chicago about the dangers of flies; from Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt*, 86.

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